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No. 43, 1959/60

THEORETICAL STRESSES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRAINS IN THE WORLD

COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Articles in the Soviet press -- particularly the news release on a report by Frol Kozlov to the Central Committee Plenum -- indicate continued ideological friction among the parties of the Communist bloc.

The resolution of the July Plenary Session that was drafted on the basis of the Kozlov report discloses that the assertion of unity and solidarity in the Bucharest communique was merely a propaganda facade.

Further evidence of ideological dissension is presented in a major article in the official Central Committee organ, Kommunist. Its authors admit that differences exist between the Communist parties and that feelings of disillusionment have been aggravated by Khrushchev's pronouncements in Bucharest counseling a review of Marxism-Leninism.

In their desire to establish a common theoretical platform for future policy, the authors declare that historical experience should be the sole criterion in assessing the validity of all theories.

This attempt of Communist ideologists to work out a modus vivendi for all parties of the Communist bloc is fraught with danger because it proclaims freedom of action in the interpretation of social processes. At best, its formula of freedom of interpretation will serve to compound the present confusion.

Note to Regular Recipients of the Soviet Affairs Analysis Service:

The Institute for the Study of the USSR in Munich, which prepares these weekly analyses of important trends and developments, is an academic corporation organized under West German laws and observes German academic vacations and holidays. Accordingly, this series of weekly analyses will be suspended until approximately the beginning of October.

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Recent articles in the Soviet press -- particularly an unusual news release on the last day of the July Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee -- reveal friction between the various national parties of the world Communist bloc and within the parties themselves.

The subject of the press release was a report by Central Committee Secretary Frol Kozlov on the "results of the conference of Party representatives in Bucharest." The report was not placed on the published agenda, and has not yet been printed in the Soviet press. Oddly enough, it was made by Kozlov, who was absent from the Bucharest delegation, and not by the loquacious Premier Khrushchev.

On the basis of Kozlov's report, the Central Committee Plenum adopted a resolution "approving" the work of the Central Committee delegation at the Bucharest conference. Also receiving the stamp of "approval" were resolutions which were not even mentioned in the conference press release. The Bucharest press release reaffirmed the correctness of the peaceful co-existence thesis contained in the "declaration" and in the "peace manifest" adopted in Moscow in November 1957, but at the same time urged vigilance, since "the causes of aggressive wars remain while imperialism continues to exist." The resolution adopted by the July Plenum states, however, that "the Communist and workers' parties have confirmed their determination to rebuff revisionist, dogmatic and left-sectarian deviations from Marxism-Leninism, and to combat manifestations of narrow nationalist tendencies..." (*Pravda*, July 17, 1960). Urging continued struggle against "revisionism, dogmatism, and sectarianism," the Central Committee Plenum admitted that they r

contradict the creative character of Marxism-Leninism and prevent the mobilization of all the forces of the socialist camp and the revolutionary workers and liberation movement for the fight for peace and socialism against imperialism... (ibid.)

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This admission is tantamount to a confirmation of the existence of theoretical disarray and serious differences both between individual Communist parties and within their actual ruling circles. There can be no doubt that the situation has become acute following the operation performed on Leninist dogma by Khrushchev in Bucharest. The assertion of unity and solidarity made in the Bucharest communique was simply a propaganda facade. This view is supported by the unusual emphasis on unanimity in the foreword of the Plenum resolution.

The preservation of ideological unity and the struggle against its "revisionist," "dogmatist," and "left-sectarian" enemies stand out clearly in two leading articles published in Pravda on July 18 and 20, 1960, "The Right Road to the Victory of Communism," and "The Unshakeable Truth of Marxism-Leninism." The latter article is especially interesting because it shows that the Bucharest communique was approved also by the state-wide conference of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and by Central Committee Plenums of the Hungarian, Bulgarian, and French parties. That an official Communist document such as the Bucharest communique, signed by twelve Party Central Committees, including the Soviet and Chinese, was submitted a second time for their approval is unprecedented, revealing strains within the Communist world organization. Another indication of the extent to which discipline has broken down is the failure up to now of a number of them, including the Chinese Communist Party, to add their "ratifications" to the series begun in Moscow.

An article on theory, "Dialectics at the Present Time," which was published in the Party Central Committee organ Kommunist (No. 10, July, 1960), clearly shows that the present ideological disputes revolve around the following questions: Is peaceful co-existence really necessary? Should the thesis of the possibility of avoiding war be taken seriously? Can the working class come to power in a capitalist country by peaceful means? Are Khrushchev's positive answers to these questions at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 really in keeping with Leninism?

To dampen the threatened reaction to Khrushchev's declaration at Bucharest that Leninist theory was out-dated, the article tries its best to prove the validity of the peaceful co-existence concept and of the possibility of avoiding war as still good Leninist doctrine. The authors of the article, editors F. Konstantinov and Kh. Momdzhyan, have to admit, however, that differences do exist between the Communist parties on these questions, and that the strong feelings aroused have been aggravated by Khrushchev's pronouncements in Bucharest. While the authors declare that it would be

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strange for a Marxist to think that the theory of peaceful co-existence practically contradicts Leninism and somehow means renouncing the fight against capitalism and the theory of the class struggle,

and that

most certainly those people are laboring under a delusion who think that the formula of avoiding world war under present-day conditions and the theory and practice of peaceful co-existence by the socialist countries can mean demobilizing their peoples in the face of the aggressive forces of imperialism,

they admit that opposing views on the possibility of avoiding war are held by various Communist theoreticians:

is it practicable? Does not the Leninist theory of peaceful co-existence contradict the fact that imperialism remains just as reactionary and as aggressive as it was forty or forty-five years ago? Some of our comrades among writers and Communist political figures are asking questions of this kind.

The article admits also that there are serious differences of opinion on the question of peaceful transition to socialism:

is this transition accompanied in all cases by an armed uprising and civil war? Does not admission of the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism in one country or another carry with it a certain danger that the exploited masses will be ideologically disarmed, lulled into passivity and hypnotized in the face of a fully armed enemy?

The writers of the article are Communist ideologists striving to maintain and fortify the leading position of the Kremlin in the world Communist movement and at the same time to produce a theoretical modus vivendi. They want to box in the passions which have flared up over these problems. But, as they defend the concepts propounded at the Twentieth Party Congress, they reconstruct them "dialectically" in such a manner as to change their meaning completely. They assert that peaceful co-existence is, in fact, the road to a socialist and Communist system:

the fight for peace is in line with the deepest interests of the peoples and bands the working masses in the capitalist countries together for the fight for socialist reorganization.

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Then, having stressed what they call the "unalterably predatory nature of capitalism," the authors repeat the concept of peaceful transition to socialism in a far from "peaceful" context:

peaceful transition to socialism depends on an active, growing revolutionary fight against capitalism and the mobilization of all sectors of society enslaved by the monopolies. ... The proletariat can and should use the appropriate methods and forms of revolutionary struggle against the enemy. An armed enemy must be opposed with arms.

This concept is accompanied by the following tactical advice:

in the fight for peace, against war and for socialism and Communism, Marxist parties must exploit all the dissensions between capitalist countries, between aggressive and non-aggressive states, and between various sectors of the bourgeoisie of a country.

In their attempt to work out some kind of defense of Khrushchev's policy of pragmatism, the authors of the Kommunist article shatter the ideological foundation of all Communist regimes by asserting the "primacy of practice over theory." They declare that historical experience should be the sole criterion in assessing the truth and vitality of all theoretical propositions. After laying down this theory, they present a practical prescription for the formulation of Communist policy:

only a searching, comprehensive, profound analysis of the concrete situation and of the concrete conditions of social life can serve as a basis for working out corrected strategy and tactics for the workers movement and for the creation of valid battle slogans.

Seeking to establish a common theoretical platform for future policy, the Communist ideologists have committed another error by proclaiming complete freedom of action in interpretation of social processes:

it is most difficult but exceptionally important to know how to orient oneself during the stormy periods of social upheaval, abrupt turning-points in history, serious alterations in the class situation, and in the correlation of the forces of socialism. We are living through just such a time.

It is clear that neither the Bucharest conference nor its "ratified" press release has or will put an end to the conflicts in the theory of the world Communist movement. The newly-invented theoretical modus vivendi with its formula of freedom of interpretation can only compound the present confusion.